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#1

[Reprinted from THE ROMANIC REVIEW, Vol. XII., No. 2, April-June, 1921.]

THE SOURCES OF SEBASTIANO ERIZZO'S *DISCORSO DEI GOVERNI CIVILI*

THE *Discorso dei governi civili* of Sebastiano Erizzo was published for the first time in Venice, in 1555.[1] It is a short treatise on a subject pertaining to Political Science. The circumstances under which it was composed are unknown and probably will continue so until a biography of the Venetian scholar shall have been written. It is safe to say, however, that Erizzo had a predilection for problems of political science. As I have tried to show in a forthcoming article, a large number of the stories contained in the *Sei Giornate* treat political subjects, and discussions and discourses inserted in this collection of short stories were in part taken over literally from the political writings of Niccolò Machiavelli. It is, therefore, not surprising that Erizzo should also be the author of a work such as the *Discorso*.

The contents of the treatise may be analyzed as follows:

Erizzo starts out by enumerating and defining the three main forms of government: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, and the three other forms into which each of the former three may easily degenerate: tyranny, oligarchy, and ochlocracy. He then goes on to describe the famous circle of forms, following each other by successive revolutions and changes. He proceeds discussing the so-called "mixed" forms of government, which are preferable to the others because they contain elements of all three good forms: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, co-operating with each other and holding each other in check. They, therefore, are more durable and less subject to changes than the simple forms He enters upon a discussion of the work of Lycurgus in Sparta, touches the constitution of Carthage and closes with the praise of the government of the Roman republic which he considers the best of all.

In his treatise, Erizzo quotes extensively from a Latin transla-

[1] For this study I use the following edition: *Discorso de i governi civili* di M. Sebastiano Erizzo gentilhuomo Venetiano a M. Girolamo Veniero. In Venetia appresso Iacopo Sansovino il Giovane, MDLXXI.

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THE SOURCES OF SEBASTIANO ERIZZO'S *SEI GIORNATE*

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Estratto dell' Archivum Romanicum. VIII, 1/2.
Direttore: G. Bertoni. Leo S. Olschki, Ginevra-Firenze-Roma.

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Important American Publications. 1920.

Spanish Drama before Lope de Vega, by J. P. Wickersham, Crawford, Philadelphia *(Publications of the University of Pennsylvania, Extra Series in Romanic Languages and Literatures,* No. 7), 1922. 8vo, 198 pp.

This is a most helpful monograph, since the well-known work of Friedrich von Schack has long been out of date and because monumental works such as that of Creizenach (of which a new edition is being published) cannot, for obvious reasons, give as detailed an account of this important period of Spanish dramatic literature as would be desirable. In eight consecutive chapters the author deals with the origins of the Spanish drama, the work of Juan del Encina, the early religious drama, the festival and pastoral plays, early romantic comedy and comedy of manners, Lope de Rueda, the Italian influences and the farce, the later religious drama, and tragedy and comedy down to the beginning of Lope de Vega's carreer as a playwright. All recent studies on the early Spanish drama have been carefully considered and amply drawn upon. An exhaustive bibliography and an index add to the value of the book. A few observations may be in place to supplement the author's remarks.

On p. 44 he speaks of Gil Vicente's *Auto da Sibilla Cassandra,* which represents a shepherdess by the name of Cassandra as connected with Solomon. She will marry no man because she believes she is the virgin in whom the Son of God will become incarnate. The reader will wonder what King Solomon has to do with the sibyls and the Trojan seer. The whole plot, however, is based on a mediaeval legend of the Queen of Sheba, regarded as one of the sibyls, who foresaw the birth of Christ and hopet to be chosen for His mother[1]. Gil Vicente's sole merit (if merit it can be called) consiste in giving the queen the pagan name familiar to a student of Virgil.

On p. 61—62, discussing Horozco's *Representación de la historia evangelica del capitulo nono de Sanct Juan,* Professor Crawford mentions the well-known parallelism between the first scene of the play and an episode of *Lazarillo de Tormes.* A blind beggar accuses his guide of

[1] W. Hertz, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, Stuttgart und Berlin 1905, p. 413 ff.

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AN ITALIAN LEGEND IN PIERRE DAMIAN

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STUDIES AND NOTES

II

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NOTES ON THE *VOCES DEL CIELO*

IN a brief article in this review[1] mention is made of what would appear to be a peculiarity of the Spanish playwright Mira de Amescua, to wit, the phenomenon of casual words dropped by characters of third or fourth rate importance which influence the trend of thought and in some cases even the action of the leading personages. Thus in the first example adduced the casual remarks of three stable boys and an old man gambling under a prison window forebode the evil doom of the prisoner who accidentally overhears them and do not fail to make a deep impression upon his state of mind. In Mira's play *El Arpa de David*, the words of two quarreling servants strike the ear of Urias ominously. But he does not heed them and comes to grief. In still another example bits of words and phrases are meant to convey a warning.

One might perhaps have expected to see the author (who elsewhere claims to have made a special study of Greek civilization) bring his study to a proper conclusion by an enquiry into the origin of this on the whole rather strange stage-technical device. Since for one reason or another he has failed to do this, I venture to point out a few facts which may prove helpful in the estimation of Mira's humanism.

The listening to stray words and their acceptation as *omina* (kledonomancy) is one of the common methods of divination the world over. Examples of it occur as early as Homeric Greece. Thus, having conquered the beggar Iros, Odysseus is greeted by the suitors upon his return:[2]

> *Ζεύς τοι δοίη, ξεῖνε, καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι*
> *ὅττι μάλιστ' ἐθέλεις . . . .*

He gladly accepts the good omen implied in these words. At Pharai, in Achaia, there stood an image of Hermes with a stone

[1] ROMANIC REVIEW, XVI (1925), pp. 57–70.
[2] *Od.* XVIII, 116.

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#11

Separate Point from Archivum Romanicum by G. Bertoni.
Vol. XI, Nr. 4. 1927. Leo S. Olschki, Geneve.

Notes on Dante's *Inferno*.

VI[1].

La selva oscura.

(*Inf.* I, 2.)

There has never, it appears, been much doubt about the correct allegorical interpretation of the "dark forest" in which the poet finds himself at the outset of his marvelous journey. No enquiry seems to have been made so far into the literal meaning which must be supposed, according to the poet's well-known system, to be at the basis of all the other possible interpretations. In other words, Does there exist any tradition connecting the entrance to the Netherworld with thick and dark forests?

Again, in the seventh circle[2] the poet finds such a forest, that of the suicides, occupying a well-defined and fairly extensive space in Hell. The allegorical purpose of this particular conception is too well-known to need explanation; so is its classical source[3]. Yet it may be questioned whether Dante had any precedent in planting such a forest in the realm of the shades.

I believe that here as in many other places the *Aeneid* furnished the model. There, in the sixth book, the Sybil gives Aeneas a description of the difficulties which will beset his path into Avernus:

131 Tenent media omnia *silvae*
Cocytosque sinu labens circumvenit atro.

136 latet arbore opaca
aureus et foliis et lento vimine ramus,
Iunoni infernae dictus sacer; hunc tegit omnis
lucus et obscuris claudunt convallibus umbrae.

[1] See above, VI, 376—85. The text is not entirely free from misprints: it is difficult for the continental printer to handle an English text and not always convenient for the author to use a continental language.
[2] *Inf.* XIII. 1 ff.
[3] See above, pp. 376 ff.

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THE STORY OF THE FALL

In his important and useful work, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*,[1] Sir J. G. Frazer suggested a new and altogether convincing explanation of the story of the fall of man as told in Genesis. At the base of the tale, according to the English scholar, is the fairly universal belief that serpents are immortal because they cast off their old skin.[2] There also exists a widespread tale of an animal, messenger of the gods, who wilfully or negligently deprives man of the immortality which was destined to him, often keeping it for himself.[3] The tree of life and the tree of knowledge were originally the tree of life and the tree of death, and the serpent persuaded Eve to eat of the latter, while he reserved for himself the fruits of the former, thereby winning immortality. Hence it is, so the ancient tale ended, that man has to die, while the serpent always rejuvenates himself, casting off his old skin.[4]

Dr. Frazer's explanation has not hitherto received the attention it deserves. Thus an Orientalist, in a recent book, still has recourse to the sex-psychological theory, assuming that the present form of the story in which there is a question of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the genuine

[1] I (London, 1918), 45 *ff.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 66. Cf. also Ch. Gidel, *Nouvelles études sur la littérature grecque moderne* (Paris, 1878), p. 441; A. Wesselski, *Märchen des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1925), p. 239.

[3] Frazer, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

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THE STUDY OF EUROPEAN FOLKLORE SINCE 1914

AN ORIENTATION

A. Periodicals and Collections

IT is a matter of regret that the bibliographical aids for the study of European folklore are as yet little developed and rather unorganized when compared with the excellent facilities existing in the fields of philology and literature, both ancient and modern. In fact, outside of the bibliography of Hoffman-Krayer,[1] which is many years in arrears and moreover based upon the German concept of *Volkskunde* (of considerably wider scope than the English term "folklore"),[2] no attempt has been made to compile systematically all new publications and to register the yearly progress achieved. The current periodicals are then still indispensable for bibliographical purposes.

For an English-speaking public of investigators the organ of the British Folk-Lore Society, *Folk-Lore*, is probably still the most important and most useful. Its volumes have not yet reached their pre-war size, and the publication of extra volumes (a series of monographs) had to be discontinued as a consequence of the war. Several of the earlier volumes of this series, long since out of print, were reprinted recently and are now available for a moderate price.

The German *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde* has managed to carry on, in spite of the highly unfavorable conditions following the close of the war, though none of its volumes has as yet reached its pre-war size. The periodical is indispensable for bibliographical purposes, since every publication of

[1] *Volkskundliche Bibliographie.* Im Auftrage des Verbandes deutscher Vereine für Volkskunde herausgg. v. E. Hoffmann, Krayer, Berlin, 1919.

[2] Cf. on this the remarks of Kaarle Krohn, *Die folkloristische Arbeitsmethode*, Oslo, 1926, pp. 16 ff.

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